

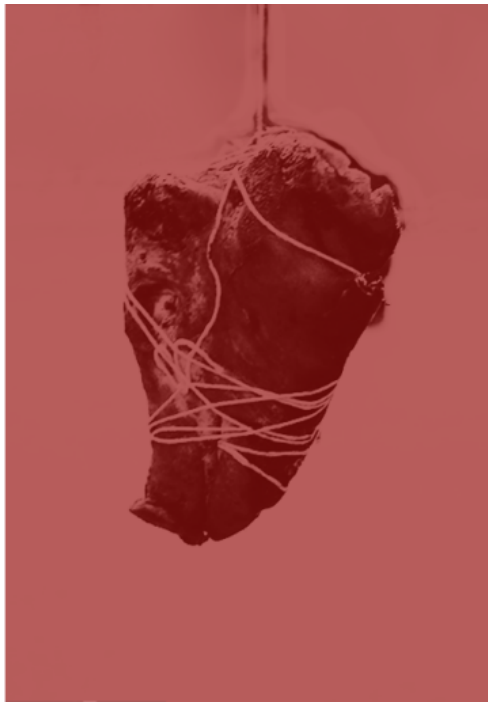
Popular Justice

SEPTEMBER 6, 2018

STRUGGLESSESSIONS



POPULAR JUSTICE



“The Party leads the struggle of the masses in function of Power, which is the principal revindication”

– Communist Party of Peru, General Political Line

As revolutionaries we are faced with two primary social contradictions differing in nature: those among the people and those between the people and their enemies. In both cases we seek to draw a line of demarcation between ourselves and the enemy and between right and wrong thinking. Among the people we draw these lines through democratic methods; against our enemies we draw lines separating them from the masses with violence (see Mao, “On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People”).

An antagonistic contradiction is characterized by the necessity of destroying one aspect of the contradiction in order to resolve it. The contradiction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat is one such contradiction. The

bourgeoisie needs the proletariat and exploits it but the proletariat does not need the bourgeoisie; this contradiction must be resolved through violence by *forcing* the bourgeoisie out of power through revolutionary violence in the form of People's War. This is the struggle for political power of the proletariat. Once the dictatorship of the proletariat is established the proletariat *suppresses* the bourgeoisie, but in destroying the bourgeoisie the proletariat itself also ceases to exist. The two depend on each other; the proletariat is defined as a class by its relation to the bourgeoisie (see Mao, "On Contradiction").

The Communist Party of Peru (PCP) writes in the General Political Line that the struggle for political power is tied to the struggle for revindications with the struggle for power being principal. In our context this is normally called the struggle for reforms, but this misses part of what the PCP is saying. The PCP refers to this struggle as the struggle for *revindications* in particular, a term unique to Indo-Peruvians—who make up a majority of the population of Peru—which means something like how the word "reparations" is used in the context of national oppression in the United States. The language is important because we are talking about something that involves raw human emotion and dignity. The masses' dignity is stripped from them regularly through all sorts of various injustices, and so the masses *demand* revindications. This struggle is linked to the struggle for power by developing the struggle for revindications as a function of political power. Gonzalo aptly says that "... in diplomatic meetings agreements signed at the table only reflect what has already been established on the battlefield, because no one is going to give up what they have not obviously lost" (Interview with El Diario). The struggle for these revindications against class enemies signal a "change of sky" where the masses see the new power is growing and the old power is beginning to crumble.

On the question of enemies among the masses

While contradictions among the people are handled through democratic means the situation is different when we talk about individual members of the masses who have adopted bourgeois ideology to such a large extent that they prey on the masses through ingrained abusive patterns of behavior. If a worker who might ordinarily be considered part of “the people” nevertheless abuses and preys on the people, they are more aptly categorized as an enemy because of their antagonistic relation to the masses. In such cases rectification is conditional and frequently impossible without the ability for people’s militias to operate semi-openly and enforce verdicts from a trial.

Apart from cases like outright harboring and covering up abuse, in the US, there are no fleshed out rectification processes for abusers that are actually proven to be effective and successful. Concepts popular among postmodernists and anarchists like “restorative justice” or “transformative justice” are riddled with idealism and frankly unsafe practices which are faulty attempts at thought reform that end up smoothing over contradictions in their misguided effort to “hold people accountable.”

An anarchist booklet called “Accounting for Ourselves: Breaking the Impasse Around Assault and Abuse in Anarchist Scenes” published in 2013 recognizes a few problems with these “accountability processes.” These processes are noteworthy only insofar as they represent nascent attempts at rectification for abusers outside of the bourgeois justice system.

The booklet defines restorative justice as something that “*focuses on the needs of the ones harmed and those who did harm, rather than the need to satisfy the*

abstract principles of law or to exact punishment.”

Meeting the needs of survivors is obviously something that should be encouraged but the scope here is far too narrow. Revolutionaries have a responsibility to serve the people. Abusive behaviors are not dispelled overnight without intense struggle, particularly *class* struggle. This process just lets these people off and leaves them free to abuse others because there is no focus on isolation of the predator. Isolation means enforcing a ban through violence by whatever means we have available with a *threat* of further violence if conditions are broken. The refusal to exact punishment here also outright neglects the struggle for power and arousing the initiative of the masses, something I will explain further below.

Continuing:

“Folks who’ve been harmed play an active role in resolving a dispute, while those who harm are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and repair the harm they’ve done. It is based on a theory of justice that sees “crime” and wrongdoing as an offense against individuals or communities rather than the state.”

Transformative justice on the other hand *“links restorative justice’s focus on rectifying harm rather than strengthening state power with a critique of systematic oppression. According to Generation Five, an organization that grounds their work to end child sexual abuse in this model, the goals of transformative justice are:*

- *Safety, healing, and agency for survivors*
- *Accountability and transformation for people who harm*
- *Community action, healing, and accountability*
- *Transformation of the social conditions that perpetuate violence—systems of oppression and exploitation, domination, and state violence”*

There is no explanation here of what “rectifying harm” actually means. What do “accountability” and “transformation” look like for abusers? In fact this is not explained anywhere in the zine. This is because it means nothing. The only description of what an accountability process might involve is totally underwhelming:

“In speaking about accountability processes, we’re referring to collective efforts to address harm—in this case, sexual assault and abuse—that focus not on punishment or legal “justice” but on keeping people safe and challenging the underlying social patterns and power structures that support abusive behavior. In the loosest sense, this might simply mean a few friends sticking up for someone who’s been hurt: asking them what they need, and trying to negotiate for those needs with the person who hurt them and among the community they share. Some processes involve a group that mediates between an individual and the person calling them out, or separate groups supporting each person and facilitating communication between them. These processes usually involve setting out conditions or “demands” for the person who’s been called out as a means of restoring safety or trust and preventing the harm from happening again, and some method for following up to ensure that these demands are met.”

In what world is it appropriate to *negotiate* with abusers to “keep people safe”? What is the purpose of non-partisan (read: bourgeois) “mediators” other than to shelter the abuser? The *Party* is partisan in this struggle as the vanguard party and judges cases on the basis of the class interests of the proletariat, as the class which leads all others in abolishing private property and class relations in general. The refusal on the part of anarchists to consider the class struggle cuts the hands off of their “accountability processes.” They reject “legal justice” of “the state” in general instead of focusing on destroying *bourgeois* justice and grasping *proletarian* justice. On the contrary we should use and expand all the tools we have at our disposal to increase proletarian political power and build the new state. Furthermore, who enforces the demands here? What do you do if the person tries to harm someone else? Here we must recall Mao’s thoughts on the subject: “Without a people’s army, the people have nothing.”

There is no objective basis at which point we can be certain that someone is no longer a threat. The question has everything to do with power. Can we keep the masses and the movement safe from this person or not? This is the first question we should ask before considering rectification. Likewise there is no explanation of what “transformation of the social conditions that perpetuate violence” actually means or what these “systems of oppression” consist of or who controls them. We know for a fact that anti-people behaviors are tied directly to bourgeois ideology engendered in capitalist social relations. The struggle against abusers is part of the struggle for proletarian political power. The act of enforcing a ban on an abusive person is also a form of rectification, where they face a degree of violence and have to undergo thought reform anyway.

Such people must be *restricted* before they can be worked out of their abusive thinking. While in a certain sense we would prefer to turn rubbish into something useful and, for example, turn patriarchal thinkers into proletarian

feminist thinkers, it is wrong to attempt such without first being able to exercise *dictatorship* over them, making sure that they cannot harm the masses and act on their abusive patterns of thinking. Mao notes that “*To maintain public order and safeguard the interests of the people, it is necessary to exercise dictatorship as well over thieves, swindlers, murderers, arsonists, criminal gangs and other scoundrels who seriously disrupt public order*” (“On the Correct Handling...”). When rectification is not possible we do what we can to mobilize the masses and ensure that they are kept safe from anyone we consider a potential threat.

Thought reform itself is a process of changing a person’s ideas and hence their behavior. Though we must use coercion to keep dangerous elements from harming the people, that isn’t the method we use to correct their thinking. We use coercion in the sense that we place restrictions on them to keep them from hurting the people again, but *when possible*, we want to encourage them and work with them to actually win them over against their bourgeois thinking to become proletarian fighters. The primary method of this is criticism and self-criticism (CSC); our principle in CSC is to “cure the sickness to save the patient” and “learn from past mistakes to avoid future ones.” We dig into their deepest and innermost thought patterns to fully expose errors in order to correct them.

Current attempts at “rectification” for such people are riddled with problems that even anarchists recognize. “Accounting for Ourselves” identifies 10 main problems. In their words:

1. *There is no clear sense of when it’s over, or what constitutes success or failure.*
2. *Standards for success are unrealistic.*

3. *We lack the collective ability to realize many demands.*
4. *We lack skills in counseling, mediation, and conflict resolution.*
5. *This stuff depresses people and burns them out.*
6. *Accountability processes suck up disproportionate time and energy.*
7. *Subcultural bonds are weak enough that people just drop out.*
8. *Collective norms encourage and excuse unaccountable behavior.*
9. *The residue of the adversarial justice system taints our application of community accountability models.*
10. *Sexual assault accountability language and methods are used in situations for which they were not intended.*

Many of these problems are obvious but they are inevitable consequences of idealism surrounding rectification. If there is one problem that stands out above all others it's that demands cannot be realized in current conditions. If this is true then what is the point of a rectification process?

The anarchists give four possible methods of dealing with abusers that attempt to resolve these contradictions: "survivor-led vigilantism," "prevention" through "gender-based organizing," "conflict resolution," and "concentric circles of affinity."

Total prevention is of course impossible while capitalist social relations persist even through socialism. An *organized political force* must exist to confront this ideology. Conscious class organization of women along patriarchal lines of oppression into fronts and militias must be prioritized to combat patriarchal ideology and empower women of our class as revolutionaries and militants. The article suggests that organizations for *men* are supposed to prevent this, an idea seeped in identity politics that has nothing to do with the struggle for

power. Conflict resolution for abusers is likewise not possible or desirable because these contradictions are antagonistic and they cannot just be “mediated” away.

“Concentric circles of affinity” is an attempt to resolve the problem of how a (poorly-defined) “community” is meant to “hold someone accountable.” There are many social venues through which an enemy can travel, though generally they are confined to one city or town. The anarchists propose establishing rules in various communities based on varying levels of trust. Since they reject leadership and the party their concept of “accountability” within different communities is too narrow; as Communist we strive for the conquest of power for the proletariat through the entire country and eventually the world. We must have eyes and ears everywhere. Again the anarchists endanger the masses with their wrong-headed attempts at “accountability” without isolation.

The only one that comes close is “survivor-led vigilantism” (again, disconnected from people’s war and proletarian leadership) which is quickly brushed aside with the clueless idea that “throttling an individual scumbag doesn’t do much to make anyone safer or end systematic rape culture, however satisfying it may feel to a vindicated survivor.” Even this is rooted in identity politics and survivor self-determination by insisting that the survivor lead the charge instead of revolutionaries carrying out justice on behalf of all survivors. Wielding the threat of violence to keep abusers out emboldens women as fighters and leaders. This is critical when militant women organizations are desperately needed for the revolutionary war effort which is impossible without the full participation and leadership of women.

Arousing the initiative of the masses

The masses deserve retribution against those who have wronged them and this struggle is directly related to the struggle for power. In people's wars, people's trials are held in villages and cities once the army had conquered power, putting all those who had abused and exploited the people in display of everyone in the village, so that the masses could strike out, denounce and voice their grievances against them with the people's army enacting swift retribution. In some instances the flood gates are opened and the masses, invigorated with the power that the revolution had granted them, delivered this retribution themselves. While many people are simply executed, other accounts are settled through a democratic process and the payment of reparations.

In the struggle against class enemies, the full participation, wrath, and anger of the proletariat must be unleashed. The masses' ability and desire to rebel must be cultivated and take priority over reforming enemies of the people. It would be wrong for us to tell the masses not to rebel when they are seething for justice. There is also a military component to this inherent to People's War, being a war of the masses which relies on them. Mao writes, "The contest of strength is not only a contest of military and economic power, but also a contest of human power and morale" (Mao, "On Protracted War"). When the masses are able to win revindications and exact retribution for their enemies their morale is significantly boosted and their initiative can be fully realized. Hinton writes in *Fanshen* that "The death of the two most notorious puppet leaders of the Fifth District dispersed some of the fear that still hung over [Long Bow]. Victories on the battlefield dissipated it further" (117). The initiative of the masses grew from this point and the peasants grew more and more eager to strike out.

In conditions of people's war the People's Army carries out selective annihilation as one of its main forms of struggle, the others being guerrilla warfare, sabotage, propaganda and armed agitation (PCP, "Military Line"). Selective annihilation is principally used against the most recalcitrant, those with a "blood debt" owed to the masses (PCP, "May Directives to Metropolitan Lima"). Those who willingly killed and hurt the people will not get to walk away scot free. We use selective annihilation to disintegrate the enemy forces and develop the United Front. This ties directly to morale. The people's army at once metes out people's justice and demoralizes the enemy. If one corrupt mayor is assassinated in a clear political move, every other corrupt mayor who hears about the instance will fear even more strongly the wrath of the oppressed.

People's trials

Popular justice as part of the United Front is organized through people's trials, with the People's Army enacting as the enforcer of verdicts decided in these trials. Organs of power wielded by the masses such as a People's Committee are necessary as "arenas" for these trials to take place in, to resolve contradictions among the masses, who are not united and are still plagued by the ideology of the old society which can be taken advantage of by the class enemy. The Party leads the masses in administering justice:

"Promote and ensure that the masses arm themselves, get organized and administer justice by themselves, as they are the Base Force of the revolution. The Party must lead and teach them how to do it. In addition, since they are fighting tirelessly, the masses create many forms of organization and struggle. We must

lead and elevate their potential to struggle for the revolution to higher levels.”

(Ibid.)

The power of a people's trial is always dependent on the strength of the People's Army, the Party's ability to mobilize the masses and the masses' ability to wield violence. Our ability to transform people is always dependent on the possibility of remolding them in class struggle (Red Guards Austin, "Sweep the Mountains and Assault the Skies"). In 1936 the Communist Party, USA launched an anti-white chauvinism campaign against a cadre named August Yokinen who had exhibited racist prejudices and behavior. They led a public trial against him and when Yokinen was expelled from the CPUSA the Party established that he could be readmitted on the basis of his participation in the struggle against Jim Crow (Jacobs, "The OCIC's White Chauvinism Campaign and its Lessons for the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Movement"). Upon his return he became one of the "staunchest fighters" for the Party's program on Black liberation and was eventually deported by the US government.

Leadership of the Party is decisive in the struggle for revindications. Sometimes it is wrong to execute someone even if the masses demand it, like for instance if doing so would alienate classes or social strata who fall under the category of "our friends." In such cases it is necessary to go to the masses and educate them on the decision even against their natural inclinations, just like propaganda used in selective annihilation campaigns. Communist adherents to Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought who participated in a debate with Foucault use an example of a factory owner who, though the masses may want dead, nevertheless must be spared to win over sections of the national bourgeoisie—this would have constituted a correct policy in the Chinese Revolution for instance. (Foucault, "On Popular Justice: A Discussion With Maoists")

The struggle of popular justice is a question of drawing clear lines of demarcation. While attacking enemies of the people we also wage a struggle against alienated ideas among the proletariat and the masses themselves. A French Communist illustrated a clear example to Foucault with the Communist Party's slogan to justify looting shops during the Nazi occupation: "Housewives, it is right to steal from the thieves." The lines are made clear: the enemies are the thieves; the masses are not thieves. (*Ibid.*).

The masses have suffered far too long at the hands of their enemies. This includes all those revisionists who apologize for the class enemy and propagate anti-masses attitudes to the people, harboring abusive people and attempting to rectify them through idealist methods that put people at risk. One anarchist vented their frustrations with these accountabilities which had wronged them for so long in a blunt and honest way:

"I think its time to abandon these false linguistic games we play and go back to the old model. I miss the days when it was considered reasonable to simply kick the living shit out of people and put them on the next train out of town- at least that exchange was clear and honest. I have spent too much time with both survivors and perpetrators drowning in a deluge of words that didn't lead to healing or even fucking catharsis" ("Safety is an Illusion: Reflections on Accountability")

People's justice strives for this clarity: to draw firm lines in the sand that cannot be crossed without swift retribution. The wrath of the proletariat and proletarian women in particular must be unleashed and organized through militias and fronts against these enemies. When possible we remold them in class struggle; when we can't we drive them out as much as we can and make sure they feel the damage they have caused.

We must never fall into old habits, forget our history and ideology won with the blood of our martyrs. In the process of struggling against the enemies of the proletariat we must seek to conquer new ground and drive out the yoke of revisionists, traitors, reformists, and NGOs. This is especially important in the struggle against patriarchal abusers; the women who lead this struggle will blaze the trail for a new generation of militant proletarian feminists and communist leaders.

Article unsigned

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